CHART AND VOYAGE

T. J. HARDY

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE ALLEGED REASONS FOR THEOLOGICAL RESERVE AND THE DANGERS INCURRED BY IT

BY

THOMAS J. HARDY, B.A.

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'Quicunque vult salvus esse.'

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PREFACE.

ABOUT two years ago, on the occasion of my leaving the ministry of the Church of England, I published a little book entitled *A Confession of Heresy, and a Plea for Frankness*. A quantity of correspondence which that little work elicited has confirmed me in an opinion I had at the time, viz., that the 'heresy' was stated much more clearly than the 'plea for frankness' was advanced. Several of my correspondents—laymen, whose judgment I greatly respect—urged that they found nothing within the pages of that book to necessitate a man's dissociating himself with orthodoxy. So that I felt I had signally failed in the task laid upon me.

In the meantime, my own feeling of the inevitableness of such dissociation has steadily gained in strength; a result for which I am not a little indebted to those who have taken the trouble to put the matter very strongly, and under many aspects, from the opposite

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point of view. The following pages are, to some extent, a *resumé* of those representations, stated and examined with, I trust, due fairness.

In making these pages public, however, I am not actuated by any desire for vindication, and their personal interest cannot extend beyond a very small circle. I have been moved to write them because of the prevalence of that attitude of which the Dean of Ripon and others have recently afforded such conspicuous examples. That this attitude, the equivalent of which in the commercial sphere would meet with speedy censure from men of probity, should in its own sphere of religion excite only a passing surprise in the columns of the press, and be allowed to pass in the main unchallenged, is, to my mind—and must be to those of many others—a very depressing circumstance. What is the cause of it? Have we given up treating religious matters seriously? Has the alteration in the moral standpoint from Divine authority to social necesssity weakened obligation in matters of 'religion'? or are we merely experiencing a temporary reaction from the splendid veracity of the century just closed?

That these pages will do more than help to clear the air in respect of these questions and of the main issue I do not anticipate; but if they achieve so much for a few men and women here and there who are predisposed to seriousness my object will be attained.

T. J. H.

London, May, 1903.

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CHART AND VOYAGE.

§ 1.

'Whosoever would be Safe.'

A SIMPLE illustration may serve to indicate the character and scope of the subject here discussed. Let us say that men are like ships constantly voyaging over a sea, of which next to nothing is known at first, though a great deal is imagined; that from time immemorial men have, for the guidance of those who should follow, drawn up charts of this sea, which contain, like the actual charts of early voyagers, a curious mixture of experience and imagination. These charts we call *creeds*, including under that term almost all statements that are made about the nature of the voyage, its destination, and especially the indication of such

routes as may be taken with safety. Churchmen are fond of telling us that the well-known clause, 'Whosoever would be saved,' prefixed to one of these creeds, means: Whosoever would be *safe* (*salvus*). Certainly, if there be any rationale for the construction and use of creeds it must be the safety of those who use them. Let this be granted.

But as time goes on and voyages multiply, as many run to and fro and knowledge is increased, these charts may naturally be expected to undergo considerable revision. Progress, like practical navigation, is largely a matter of *unlearning*. Man starts with the assumption that he knows; experience teaches him his ignorance, and at the same time enables him to arrive at something more like exact knowledge. As he advances in knowledge, the channels of legitimate belief become narrower. The chart, or creed, which takes as its motto 'Salvus,'

must of necessity record what experience has proved to be 'unsafe,' and our use of such charts will lie in avoiding such unsafe courses. By this narrowing of the channels of legitimate belief I do not of course imply that the view is contracted, or anything of the beauty and grandeur of the scene impaired. The 'shining spaces of the sea' yield not less but more pleasure when we know the exact position of sunken rocks and can steer clear of them. Still less would I imply that with the acquisition of exact knowledge, faith becomes dull and mechanical, or that anything of the 'adventure of life' is diminished. For, on the one hand, the quality of faith is strengthened by its reasonableness, though the number of things believable may be diminished. On the other hand, life has exigencies and perils quite sufficient without those arising from ignorance and uncertainty. All that is meant by

this limitation of belief is that, as in navigation the recorded discovery of rocks and shoals necessarily narrows the route, so with the growth of exact thought we can no longer conduct our navigation with indiscriminate credulity, but are obliged very carefully to steer within the limits of reasoned probability.

For example, once it was not only possible for men to believe in fairy-tales, but they were disposed to believe in them ; now, not only are they indisposed to believe in them, but they find it impossible to believe in them. Once men lived in the very atmosphere of the marvellous, and miracles were as commonly expected and as credibly reported as the existence of dragons and Eldorados among early explorers and geographers. Just as the whole atmosphere of such books as Mandeville's Voyages or that map of the world which hangs in Hereford Cathedral is one of romance, so the whole atmo-

sphere of the early and mediæval ages—the ages which gave us the creeds—was one of miracle. Now-a-days our whole mental environment has changed, and no man would order his life or invest his capital on the chance of a miraculous intervention in his favour. In a day when the guilt of a witch was established by her chancing to survive a ducking, it was only natural that a doctrine should be thought to gain credibility by its association with a supposed miracle. But this is a class of evidence not accepted by modern judgment; and no intelligent man to-day, accustomed in the crudest degree to the law of evidence, would assent to a proposition on the strength of a supposed miracle. Indeed, progress may be defined as the interval between more credulity and less reason, and more reason and less credulity.

Obviously, therefore, whosoever would be safe must bear in mind the

great change that has come over our way of estimating believable things. And my point in this simple illustration —not to press it into further use at present—is that to be reticent about facts that have come to light since the greater charts were projected is to incur very great danger to the welfare of all concerned. Unless, then, our creeds undergo revision, and unless our pilots admit the experience of those who have preceded them, and engage frankly to steer by up-to-date charts, it may be said of every one for whom they were responsible, in the concluding words of the afore-mentioned creed : '*Salvus esse non poterit.*'

§ 2.

Definition and Examples.

I AM now in a position to define what is here meant by theological reserve. It may be defined as :

Either the positive suppression of facts[1] *that militate against received opinion, or else the employment of such facts in such a manner as to make it appear that they agree with received opinion.*

One or two examples will render the attitude I have tried to define still more clear:

(1) A simple case is afforded in the Bishop of Ripon's recently published Introduction to the *Temple Bible*. It goes without saying that theology—non-Roman theology, at least—rests its teaching on the Bible as *the* inspired word of God; and we do not need reminding that modern criticism has deprived that inspiration of the character of 'infallibility,' and given the Bible its true place—no doubt a high one—among the literatures of the world. The

[1] *i.e.*, knowledge of all kinds for which there is the highest degree of probability: no 'fact' or 'truth' being *more* than this.

Bishop says :—'To deny its inspiration is to deny a fact which is wider and more significant than the influence of Shakespeare' (p. 94.) This, I maintain, is a deliberate shirking of the real issue. No one dreams of denying the inspiration of the Bible; what is disputed is that the inspiration of the Bible is of a kind not found elsewhere in literature. His lordship, with a little rhetorical manipulation, makes it appear that he has demonstrated this kind of 'inspiration.' In the old sense of the word, 'inspiration' was held to be identical with 'infallibility.' Obliged to admit that the Bible is fallible, our Broad Churchman nevertheless retains a word which, though it signifies nothing—etymologically[1]—of the Hebrew and Christian writings that it does not equally signify of the Vedas and Shakespeare, *seems* to

[1] 'Inspired' merely means 'in-breathed,' and is an early and picturesque way of expressing the source of all ideas both good and bad. Cp. Clodd's *Childhood of the World* (p. 72).

those unaccustomed to use words in an exact sense to argue for the Bible a peculiar weight and authoritativeness.

This is one example of what we have defined as 'the employment of facts in such a manner as to make it appear that they agree with received opinion'; and it is interesting to compare with the Bishop's attitude on the subject one which is inculcated in a book which might with advantage be more seriously studied at the present time than it is. Mr. John Morley, writing on 'Compromise,' says:

'If the Bible is to be taught only because it is a noble and most majestic monument of literature, it should be taught as *that* and no more. That a man who regards it solely as supreme literature should impress it upon the young as the supernaturally inspired word of God is a piece of the plainest and most shocking dishonesty. Let a youth be trained in simple and straightforward

recognition of the truth, that we can know, and can conjecture, nothing with any assurance as to the ultimate mysteries of things. Let his imagination and his sense of awe be got from those springs, which are none the less bounteous because they flow in natural rather than supernatural channels. Let him be taught the historic place and source of the religions which he is not bound to accept, unless the evidence for their authority by and by brings him to another mind. A boy or girl trained in this way has an infinitely better chance of growing up with the true spirit and leanings of religion implanted in his character than if they had been educated in formulæ which they could not understand by people who do not believe them.'[1]

(2) Another example is afforded by the attitude taken by Broad Churchmen toward the miraculous. A miracle, in the

[1] *On Compromise* (p. 193. Eversley Edition.)

old sense of the term, was a disturbance in the observed sequence of cause and effect, an intervention of Deity for the purpose of attesting the authority of some person or notion. Every one familiar with the Bible knows how widely this conception of the nature and function of miracle underlay early beliefs. Our Broad Churchman, however, tells us that he does not mean by a miracle a 'supernatural' disturbance in observed sequences, but only a sequence hitherto unobserved. In this there is nothing repugnant to the most exact modern thought. Such isolated occurrences are constantly presenting themselves to our observation. Some of them are speedily explained, *i.e.*, when correlated with other phenomena; others, again, leave us in a state of suspense as to their antecedents. It is doubtful whether there is any advantage in calling such occurrences 'miracles,' but if they are called 'mir-

acles,' then, and in the sense above defined, miracles certainly do happen, and will happen until human observation has exhausted the possibilities of nature; and in this theology and science are at one. Two facts, however, must be borne in mind about these 'miracles': first, that their existence rests entirely on evidence; secondly, that they attest no more than their own existence. Let us glance at these two facts carefully. If the evidence brought forward in favour of any particular miracle be satisfactory, then we must, in reason bound, accept it; but while we accept it, it can attest nothing save its own existence. When, *e.g.*, it is claimed that Jesus, alone of all men, was born of a virgin, the claim, granting it true, can tell us nothing whatever about Jesus except that he was born in a certain manner. Its only effect, therefore, is to complicate the working of nature, and defer our understanding of natural processes.

But do miracles—the many 'miracles' of Science tell us nothing? They tell us a great deal *when they are correlated with other phenomena.* But when thus correlated they cease to be 'miracles,' *i.e.* isolated facts. A miracle, therefore, contains no information for us until it ceases to be a miracle.

Needless to say, this is *not* the Broad Churchman's view. He is obliged by his education to relinquish the old conception of 'miracle' as a divine intervention, but he still clings to the idea of its authoritative function. He practically tells us, as the Dean of Ripon has done, that the virgin-birth of Jesus may possibly be explained, *e.g.* correlated with other biological phenomena; in the meantime he uses it as a divine attestation of the character of Jesus. The ordinary shrewd man will see through such a position at a glance. Clearly, our Broad Churchman must either retain the old

conception of miracles—in which case he is at issue with the conclusions of reason; or else he must come up to line with the conclusions of reason—in which case his doctrines and personæ are deprived of supernatural sanction, and miracles have no function until they cease to be miracles. In his present attitude—the attitude we are seeking to illustrate—he is trying to combine a respect for modern knowledge with a desire to participate in the benefits of superstition. It is a clear case of the employment of facts in such a way as to make it appear that they agree with received opinion, and is an example of what a great critic of our times has called 'the romantic desire to combine incompatible opposites.'[1]

The Dean of Ripon has afforded us perhaps the best example of theological reserve, both as to the suppression and

[1] Cp. Max Nordau: *The Malady of the Century.*

the manipulation of facts, brought into prominence among the Anglican clergy in recent days. At a meeting some months ago the Dean created considerable astonishment, not to say consternation, by a certain statement about the virgin-birth of Jesus. It would be obviously unfair to quote that statement as it was reported, because the Dean immediately contradicted the report; it is impossible to state what the Dean actually said, because he has never vouchsafed us an authentic version of his utterance. We take it, however, that he created an impression that he did not hold the virgin-birth to be a miracle of such a kind that it could not ultimately be explained by a fuller acquaintance with biological law; and in a letter addressed to his Bishop,[1] he said that while he did not deny or question the virgin-birth of Jesus, he conceived it

[1] See letter in question in the *Daily News*.

possible that it would be ultimately found to be in harmony with natural law.

Apart from the pure conjecture of such a position, where is the Dean's *evidence* that the virgin-birth of Jesus ever took place? Received opinion credits it as fact; but received opinion has credited as fact all the mediæval miracles and the story of Jack the Giant Killer. The Dean, if he be a man of ordinary shrewdness, would not invest five pounds in a concern about which he had not more than the testimony of received opinion. He would, like other shrewd men, demand some evidence, other than received opinion, that he was not putting his money into a bogus company. There are those who tell us that we ought not to judge these high matters of faith by the ordinary rules of reason. For my part, I have a different estimate of the momentous nature of these matters. Here is a matter that may affect my everlasting destiny

and that of all for whom I care and conceive myself responsible; am I to exercise less scrutiny towards it than I do towards the investment of a few shillings?

I challenge any average man—the Dean himself, should these pages chance to meet his eye—to bring forward such evidence for the virgin-birth of Jesus as would warrant him in any ordinary procedure of life, supposing that in it he was responsible,—by his action, his words, or the disposal of his money,—for the welfare of wife, children, or others dependent upon him. Until such evidence is forthcoming, all talk about the possible expansion of biological laws so as to include parthenogenesis in the human species is idle talk. It merely throws dust in the eyes of the populace, and the fact that the dust is raised by a man of learning and repute makes confusion worse confounded.

When the Dean of Ripon adduces such evidence for the virgin-birth as would be respected in an English Court of Law, it would be time to talk about the modification of the laws of human biology; until that evidence is forthcoming, all the shifts to which the Dean is driven only render more conspicuous the failure of any attempt to sail a ship over rocks whose existence is not recorded in ancient charts.

(3) One more instance of the attitude we are examining affects the nature of Jesus, and is occasioned by a book in high esteem at the present time among those in the 'liberal' wing of Anglican orthodoxy. I refer to Mr. Illingworth's essay in Christian Apology.[1]

The subject of this essay is the Incarnation of God in man, and of such a discussion the focal point is, not unnaturally, Jesus. Speaking personally,

[1] *Reason and Revelation.* By J. R. Illingworth.

I must confess that I prefer to estimate the significance of Jesus by his merits as a man, without introducing into that estimate any metaphysical subtleties. However, we are here dealing with Theology, and are obliged to accept provisionally the assumptions of the theologian in order to examine his method. Now, there are two ways in which Jesus may be viewed as an incarnation of the Divine (*a*) as the highest type of human life, and consequently the *unique* example of relationship with 'the Father'; or (*b*) as the *sole* instance of 'God manifest in the flesh.' I have underlined the words *unique* and *sole* because they answer to two Latin words both often translated, as in the Creeds, by our word 'only.' Now, the whole theological world is divided into the hostile camps of arianism and orthodoxy according as Jesus is spoken of as the 'unique' or as the 'sole' Son of God. The line of cleavage is here. The Creeds

speak of Jesus as the 'only' or 'only-begotten' Son of God (filium Dei ungenitum). But in Mr. Illingworth's volume we are left entirely in the dark as to whether he regards Jesus in the traditional and exclusive sense, or as the unique Son who is reverently acknowledged in every Unitarian Church, and, we may add, by every thoughtful person. Which meaning does Mr. Illingworth adopt? His book shows him strongly in sympathy with the latter; but the Church to which he owes allegiance stands pledged by its creed to the former. Among the older apologists as, *e.g.*, the late Dr. Liddon, there was no such uncertainty. No one can read the famous Bampton Lectures on the Divinity of Christ and doubt for a moment what is the author's position. Whatever be the logical and historical defects of that very sincere volume, there is no attempt to combine mutually contradictory propositions. The same cannot be said

of Mr. Illingworth's volume, and while the fact is significant of the change that is coming over the theological conception of Jesus, it is neither a very creditable nor a very useful thing that a writer should take advantage of verbal ambiguity to conceal the doubt that evidently exists in his own mind.

It may come as a revelation to unsophisticated persons that many clergymen who profess a belief in the 'only Son of God' mean thereby no more than that Jesus was a *unique* son. In the general acceptation of the term, 'only' means much more than 'unique.' When a man speaks of his only child he does not mean his eldest, or his best-behaved child, but that he has no other children. Similarly, when Jesus is spoken of as 'the *only* Son of God,' the natural inference is that he stands to God in a relationship altogether peculiar and unattainable by any other creature. That,

in the face of modern knowledge, of the essential unity of the universe, and of the teaching of Jesus himself, is an impossible conception. It is no wonder that those who find themselves committed to it should find their intelligence continually belying their profession. Our contention here is that their position would be more honest and more useful if they frankly acquainted the popular mind with the bearings of modern knowledge on the subject, and at least ceased to subscribe to antiquated views against which their intelligence is in rebellion.

§ 3.

Of those whom these Pages Concern.

I HAVE been led to dwell on these examples more fully than I intended, because, in the first place, I do not wish to enlist the reader's sympathy on the side

of mere negations. I am not asking him to quit his ships and remain at home,

> 'Fearful to put out to sea,
> In to-day's perplexity,'

because rocks and shoals are now apparent where all was once deemed to be plain sailing. Mine is the more difficult task of urging that attention be paid to these dangers, that the voyage may,—nay, must—still be made, but that its safe conduct depends on a recognition of the narrowing channels of legitimate belief. And, such being my task, it seemed only right to describe as discriminatingly as possible some examples of the way in which that channel has actually narrowed, before proceeding to examine the attitude of those who are bent on continuing to use the old charts. In the second place, it seemed advisable, as it is obviously impossible within the space of an essay to survey the whole scope of religious belief in the light of modern

discovery, to select certain important areas and illustrate from them, once and for all, the difference between the old charts and the newly marked channels. Those areas seem fairly representative of the whole voyage. Within the region of religious thought there are few questions men are pondering so carefully to-day as those connected with the Bible, the miraculous, and the person of Jesus. I have tried to indicate what we can, and what we cannot believe as regards each; and, as regards what we cannot believe, I have given examples from those living Churchmen of learning and repute of an attitude which seems on the face of it unwarrantable and useless, but which nevertheless is typical of the attitude of a vast number of responsible persons.

What we are now concerned with is an examination of the reasons alleged for this attitude, which I will endeavour carefully to weigh with the dangers in-

curred by it. But before proceeding with this, it is well to be quite clear both as to the persons actually concerned in this attitude, and the important part they contribute to the destiny of religious thought.

If the reader will refer to the definition of theological reserve above given, it will be at once evident that we are here dealing with an attitude taken up by *intelligent men.* This rules out of consideration several sections of religious thought and feeling. We are not, *e.g.*, concerned with those who, renouncing all charts, choose to steer by the haphazard of sentiment; nor with those who, though they possess charts, are ignorant of recent discoveries; nor with those who claim for their chart an infallible accuracy which no discoveries, however at variance with received opinion, can impeach. With none of these groups, whose equivalents to the religious world

will be easily recognised, are we here concerned. We limit ourselves to the position of those who, familiar with modern method and its results, mask a latent Rationalism or Unitarianism behind an appearance of conformity with received opinion.

This class of persons is exceedingly important in maintaining whatever hold the Churches may be said to have on the national intelligence. Sir Leslie Stephen, writing in 1873, said: 'Whatever claims are still possessed by the Church of England to the allegiance of thinking men, are due to the Broad Church element among the clergy.'[1] To-day, not only is that view as true of the Anglican communion as it was thirty

[1] 'Free Thinking and Plain Speaking,' Essays by Leslie Stephen. London: Longmans & Co., 1873. P. 7. Now, unfortunately, out of print. A cheap re-issue of some of these Essays would be of great service to-day.

years ago, but in view of the rapid growth of culture among 'the Free Churches,' we may extend it to all Protestant communions, and say that whatever claims they have to the allegiance of thinking men, are due to the rationalistic element within them. And I am bold to say that if the increasingly large number of men who cloak this rationalism by an outward conformity to received opinion, would cast aside their trappings, and avow themselves what they are, this element, which is admittedly the spring of what health and vigour there is within the Churches, would issue in a stream of fresh thought and feeling to invigorate our national life with the energy and joy of a religious revival. And it is because theological reserve plays so large a part in this restraint, that I claim for it so much importance.

§ 4.

The Alleged Reasons for Theological Reserve.

WHAT are the motives alleged for the suppression or manipulation of facts in the manner above instanced?

In raising this question I wish to omit all references not only to motives that are plainly unworthy, but to personal motives of any kind. Such motives are altogether beside the issue that is raised here. If a man is reticent about his real opinions, the case is not made worse for those who depend on his candour should his motive turn out to be a desire for preferment, or the good things of life. A shipwreck is not rendered more disastrous by the fact that the owners deliberately falsified the chart to obtain the insurance. The mere fact of a faulty chart would have rendered the disaster quite as bad. It is not the character of the men who lead us we are inquiring into, but their judgment.

If their *judgment* appear faulty we need not assume, and we shall not assume, that it is so because their character is defective.

In one aspect only does personal motive appear to affect the question, and it is perhaps as well to speak of this at once. It is often said that clergymen would not be so reticent about their real opinions as they are were it not that by throwing up their positions as clergymen many of them would find it exceedingly difficult to support those dependent upon them. This is a very serious aspect of the case, and one in which any man would naturally shrink from laying down the law for another. Many will urge that if a man have a wife and family dependent upon him, his love for them ought to supersede every other consideration. The difficulty is that if this plea be admitted in one walk of life, why should it not obtain in all? If, on the other hand, clergymen

are willing that their profession should not be taken to be as exacting as secular avocations, they must not be surprised if it takes a correspondingly lower rank in importance and reality. A man cannot possibly be allowed to play fast and loose with terms in a way which, if he were a company promoter, would bring him into contempt, and yet retain for his profession our respect and attention. Either the language he uses commits him to its plain meaning; or, if it does not, we cannot take his profession very seriously. The plea, therefore, here raised, either sets a very dangerous precedent for loose dealing, or else deprives theology of all seriousness.

But the strength of this plea is modified by the fact that a man is never really shut up to one mode of earning a living. If his candour obliges him to quit one religious organisation, there is almost certain to be another ready to

accept his services. Whatever be the privations and inconveniences attendant on candour, the cases are few where they amount to actual martyrdom. But —and this is where the plea in question affects theological reserve—the disabilities incurred by candour could have no existence were it not for reticence. No man would ever wake up to find himself in a false position if his own teachers and pastors had been outspoken; nor would any communion be impossible for intelligent men whose received opinion was held as not more than provisional, and where the suggestions of progressive faith were met, not by the veto of authority, but by the calm deliberation of reason.

Having said so much on the personal aspect of the question, we are now free to examine generally such prudential reasons for theological reserve as are commonly put forward.

§ 5.

The Plea of Caution.

It is said that theological reserve is only one aspect of that caution which is so characteristic of English people, and that as such it is ineradicable.

That caution is one of the finest traits of our national character we shall all admit, but that the attitude we have been defining is a part of this trait, or even akin to it, is another matter. Surely, it may be fairly urged, our national caution would better be exemplified by insisting on the employment of up-to-date charts, than by persisting in the use of old ones. The captain who should prefer a chart of Drake or Frobisher to one of the last decade would not be extolled for his caution but dismissed for his folly. This, however, may only show how far the standpoint here taken differs from that of those who make caution a plea of

reserve. Let us, then, give their argument the fairest possible hearing, since we are not engaged in a game of rhetoric, but in a candid attempt to arrive at the common-sense of the question. Let us fully concur with them as to the desirability of caution in the early stages of new opinions. In the words of an author already quoted, let us admit the value of 'a wise suspense in forming opinions, a wise reserve in expressing them, and a wise tardiness in trying to realise them.'[1] But when everything that can be urged in favour of caution has been urged, let us remember that it applies to opinions before they have become commonplaces of belief. Those who advocate theological reserve on the ground of caution seem to have a singularly inadequate idea of the actual condition of the popular mind, and to be suffering from a kind of superannuated apprehension. Take, *e.g.*, the case

[1] Mr. John Morley's *Compromise*, p. 4.

of the Bible: Does the average man of intelligence believe it to be infallible in its science and its history, or uniform in its theology, or perfect in its ethical theory? There is not a single person living to-day whose opinion is worth canvassing, who does not agree with the late Dr. Jowett, when, more than fifty years ago, he urged that the Bible must in all these respects be treated like any other book. Or, take the case of the miraculous: No doubt, at the end of the Middle Ages, when prayer and miracle still formed the atmosphere of the people's life, and when the principle of uniformity was in its infancy, it would have been an incautious proceeding to introduce at a stroke a principle that negatived all 'supernatural' interference with the observed sequence of events. But to-day, the principle that events depend on a natural sequence of cause and effect not only underlies all the brilliant results of

scientific inquiry, but is the practical basis of all men everywhere in the conduct of their affairs. If any man of average intelligence can be found who is in the habit of investing his money indiscriminately in perfect confidence that should his stock turn out to be bad, a miracle will be wrought to bring it up to par, it would no doubt be kind to acquaint him with the actual nature of events as gently as possible. As a matter of fact, no such man can be found. If, then, there is such a universal *practical* scepticism as to miracles, where is the need for caution in frankly announcing that, so far as we are aware, such interventions do not exist and never have existed? Or, again, why should we, when speaking of Jesus, retain the term '*only* Son' in a day when every intelligent boy and girl asks us point-blank: If Jesus were essentially different from us, what can be the moral significance of his conquest? Reticent

Churchmen do not credit mankind with quite the same amount of intelligence as they themselves appear to enjoy. Their plea on the score of caution only shows how far out of touch they are with the indications of progress. Themselves awaking when the sun is high in the heavens they steal cautiously from bed to bed wishing, in the abundance of their good nature, to rouse the sleepers softly and advise them as gently as possible that the hours of slumber have passed. To their genuine astonishment, the beds are empty, and those who occupied them have been already for some hours toiling in the fields.

§ 6.

The Plea of avoiding Pain.

But while the majority of intelligent men and women are sufficiently familiar with the modern standpoint to render

the apprehension of the churches superfluous, there are undoubtedly here and there individuals who are either unacquainted with that standpoint, or else have not surveyed their early religious impressions from it; and it is asserted that considerable pain will be incurred by these unless some degree of reserve is exercised.

Such a plea seems humane and reasonable. We all shrink from inflicting pain, and probably compromise our opinions more with a view to avoid shocking the sensibilities of others than from any other motive. As an argument, however, for *general* reserve, the plea falls to the ground by the very fact of the *partial* kind of reserve it advocates. If we are told that we are to discriminate and deal gently with the few whose eyes are unaccustomed to the clear light, no one will disagree: it is but a plea that we should guide our words with discretion. If, on the other hand, we are bidden to with-

hold the truth from all for the sake of the few who cannot bear it, it is a humaneness that is four-fifths cruelty.

Even in the case of the few, however, experience teaches us that there is seldom any real kindness in concealment. The young girl who goes out in the stillness of the morning to attend her early communion, who there joins unhesitatingly in prayer, hymn, and creed, is exactly the nature, once suspicion is aroused—as with experience it must inevitably be—to follow up the suspicion wherever it may seem to lead, and being without a guide, or anyone to candidly show her her bearings she is helmless on a perilous sea. The very people whose susceptibilities we fear to wound are often those who are most susceptible to truth. Commonly they never succeed in getting themselves clear, but remain in the vague and profitless region of mere resentment against the early teaching that had

proved false, with perhaps an added sense of having been duped. Experience tells me that the most brutal frankness can hardly injure the character so much as the refinements of deception.

I must confess I am no party to the sentiment :

'Leave thou thy sister where she prays,'

not because of any fanatical regard for knowledge,—to which indeed I would be the last to lay claim,—but because I conceive the final interests of the simplest and tenderest cannot better be served than by truth, *i.e.* by what we have reason to believe most probable. Such a sentiment as that just quoted lays too much stress on one aspect. We are too apt to forget that Truth, if it be stern in its candour, is yet gentle as a mother, and brings its own healing and calm. We do not sufficiently bear in mind that there can be no loss in the wise exchange of a less probable belief for one more probable.

And even if the latter be less positive and concrete—I do not say it will be—than that which formerly occupied our thoughts and affections, still the gain to our independence of mind and will is a very great one. The man who has frankly disavowed the notion that his goings are ordered by a special providence is far more likely to be alert and vigorous than he was when he imagined the whole world arranged with a view to meeting his requirements. To believe that supernatural aid is ever at hand to succour us in 'temptation' no doubt invests us with a romantic interest, but it is not the kind of thing calculated to increase our resistance or raise the social standard. However, to keep strictly within the limits of this inquiry, I submit that candour, instead of injuring the naturally timid, creates a bracing atmosphere destructive of timidity and favourable to healthier qualities. Let us avail ourselves of an

open-air treatment. Surely the opposite method of reserve, of living in an enervating fool's paradise of seeming assent and conformity, is altogether fatal to a robust habit of mind, and tends to breed a valetudinarian race, distrustful, dependent, and eminently artificial.

§ 7.

The Plea of Incompleteness.

ANOTHER plea often put forward on behalf of reserve is that we ought to wait until we have a complete system to substitute for that which we feel has ceased to obtain for intelligent minds.

This—to revert to our original illustration—seems equivalent to saying that we ought not to admit single errors in our chart until the whole of the sea has been thoroughly explored. Charts are not made in this manner, nor is Truth manifest except by a long series of admitted

errors. At no time are men conscious of more than a very small part of the progress they are making. The day is long past when creeds could be constructed by ballot. Every decade shows less prospect of our arriving at a system which shall meet the case and enlist the sympathies of all. As a matter of fact, while the principles of belief become clearer with the growth of knowledge, the expression of belief becomes more and more individual.

What then? Are we to hold our opinions in reserve, are we to acquiesce in the old charts simply because we cannot utter the whole matter in a breath? Those who urge this upon us would be the first to object—and justly object—to any such procrastination in the field of public affairs. They would look askance at any proposal for a sudden realisation of social or economic ideals. They would urge small reforms as the

only means of securing social advance. They would smile incredulously did we suggest that all improvement should be deferred until the dramatic moment of a millennium. Now, the view they take with regard to the realisation of social ideals is precisely the view we take with regard to the realisation of religious opinion. Why, we ask, should not it advance by means of small reforms? Can it advance in any other way? Is there anything within the range of human achievement that ever has advanced in any other way?

Reserve based on such a plea is accompanied by two grave dangers that call for attention. In the first place it predisposes men to an unworthy and depressing acquiescence in the *status quo*. If the same plea were admitted in the realm of affairs, it is not too much to say that almost every kind of social advance would be at an end. But if we admit it

in matters of belief we shall at least be perilously near lending it countenance in the practice of life. We are so constituted that we cannot, if we would, divorce religion from life, and control the one by a set of regulations not applicable to the other. If we blunt our judgment in the realm of opinion, it will be blunted in the realm of practice; if we are lethargic in the one, we shall be lethargic in the other. Weaken the claims of principle in the one, you weaken them also in the other. A conservative religion has never achieved political progress. If in the realm of opinion we are indisposed to move except in the mass, the whole social organisation will also be deprived of individual initiative. I have heard it said again and again by clergymen and others that they would rejoice to see the formularies of their churches revised to date, only, say they, what prospect is there of obtaining the necessary concensus of

opinion? Little enough, in the present acute state of party feeling in most churches. But there is nothing to prevent individuals from coming out of their respective systems, and each one professing his convictions in his own way.

The other danger is that of cowardice and its deteriorating effect on the individual will and affection. Granted a man knows that what he is keeping back is true, and knows also that others are enduring odium for those very truths, his sympathy and loyalty must suffer if he does not declare himself for the despised minority. His reserve then becomes not merely a desertion of principle, but a desertion of humanity.[1] Truth always calls men, but she calls them with trumpet tones when their brothers are suffering in her cause. To disobey that call, to let others pay the price of the truth and free-

[1] Cp. for illustration Froude's 'Short Studies, Vol. 1, p. 434 *et seq.* (Ed. 1893).

dom we enjoy is to be wanting in the most elementary notions of honour, and hastens the debilitating process of reserve.

§ 8.

The Plea of Usefulness.

Yet another plea for reserve is made by those who sincerely and earnestly wish to avail themselves of the many opportunities for usefulness naturally afforded by recognised beliefs.

This plea is of course commonly associated with clergymen and ministers, but in these days of lay ministration, and when much public philanthropic work avails itself of the auspices of orthodoxy, it is not a plea that can be confined to any one class or profession.

A man, it is said, cannot devote himself freely to others if he have to spend much of his life in creating his own sphere of influence ; true, there is a small

minority of unsectarian persons with whom he may work conscientiously, but it is urged that as this minority has incurred, albeit unjustly, the odium of the rest, his case is rendered rather worse than better, by availing himself of their support. Here, on the other hand, among the orthodox, is a sphere of influence ready to hand. The old beliefs, small as is their hold on the popular mind to-day, nevertheless are allied to a prestige which will open every door to him, and allow him to concentrate his whole energy on immediate usefulness. Life being so short, and human destiny so momentous, why should he not avail himself of this sphere of influence—whether it take the shape of a pulpit, or a medium for philanthropic work—suppressing or modifying his real opinions where they come into conflict with the prescribed belief?

The plea appears to be a very strong one, and it is because it is raised by men

of such eminently sincere motive that I have wished to state it as strongly as possible. I know that the man who makes it is accused by some of taking himself too seriously, and that the momentous destinies of men are not likely to be considerably affected by whatever attitude an individual may elect to take up. From that kind of reply I wish at once to dissociate myself. It is a form of argument more commonly on the lips of the sybarite than the soldier, more suited to the after-languor of the feast than the open spaces of life and the cause of those crying for bread. We cannot take ourselves too seriously in the wish to be of use to our fellows, nor can we afford to smile at the temerity of the feeblest because of the magnitude of his task. The man, I submit, is to be honoured for his intentions, however his judgment may err, who in a luxurious and effeminate generation is actuated by the motive of service.

But, having endeavoured to give just and adequate weight to this plea, I am bound to point out that the mere fact of our motive being excellent will avail us nothing where truth to fact is concerned. In the laudable wish to accomplish a shorter route our captain may steer by an old chart, but if in so doing he strike upon a reef how hollow will his excellent motive ring! Nature, we cannot too often remind ourselves, takes no account of motive, but where her laws are contravened is remorseless. Rocks do not disappear by miracle because, for the convenience of a shorter route, we attempt to sail over them. The very first rock we encounter in the attempt referred to is the refusal of our nature to respond to the course we are led to take, and the consequent violation of the inner harmonies of the soul's organism.[1]

[1] I was not aware, when writing this, that it is one of Maeterlinck's main positions. I am glad to be able to add his authority.

No man can turn his life to any account who is hampered by the knowledge that he is false to those convictions to which reason imperiously demands his assent, or, at least, by the haunting surmise that he is acting a part. The man who seeks to purchase influence at the price of veracity pays too dearly ; he is giving in exchange what is really his capital stock of energy, and is incurring the paradox of the man in the parable who gained the world at the cost of his life.

This is probably the gravest *personal* danger of the attitude in question, the damage it immediately effects to the delicate mechanism of the moral sense. It is inevitable that a man should begin to deteriorate directly he is false to his reasoned convictions. The ear always hearkening for the expedient ceases to respond to the finer vibrations of principle. Circumstance tends to become more and more the guide of life. Reason

sinks into subservience to desire, feeling, and the pressure of outward things. In the confusion that ensues moral distinctions are lost. When candidates for 'Orders' are told that they may 'persist in heresy till the policeman appears,'[1] *i.e.* until the law intervenes to check them, they are virtually being told that the wrongfulness of wrong-doing lies entirely in its detection, which is equivalent to substituting for the Eighth Commandment the exhilarating maxim: *Thou shalt not be caught.* That scores of clergymen retain their office on exactly the same understanding, not aware of the immorality of it, is proof sufficient of the deterioration which the mind undergoes when expediency is substituted for Truth, and conscience abdicates in

[1] I hope the popular attribution of this saying to the late Bishop of London is incorrect, but I have repeatedly heard it so quoted by clergymen of liberal views who chuckled over it as a most satisfactory solution to the problem of orthodoxy!

favour of legal opinion. And this condition, I must again point out, is not the deliberate hypocrisy for which it is often mistaken. Were it such, its obvious viciousness would rob it of much of its danger. It is the result of the very honourable motive of usefulness unbalanced by regard for fact.[1]

[1] It has been said, with regard to liberal-minded clergy, that they may, with good conscience, retain their position in the Churches, provided they 'take up an avowed and bold attitude of antagonism to the restrictions in belief, which, either explicitly or by implication, are now imposed upon them by the documents or traditions of the religious bodies to which they belong.' (See two papers on 'The Ethics of Religious Conformity,' contributed to *Ethics* of Nov. 29 and Dec. 13, 1902, by Mr. H. J. Bale.) This at first sight seems to be a position of some honesty. A man finds himself in disagreement with some article or articles of the creed of his Church. He publicly announces the fact, and leaves it to the disciplinary discretion of the Church whether he is allowed to remain in it or no. It is not, it will be observed, a case of reserve at all, but one of the frankest outspokenness. Whether such an attitude is possible for clergymen it is hard to say. If it be possible, and if it were carried into effect by a number of men of some standing, it

§ 9.

The Plea of Usefulness from the Layman's Point of View.

I WISH to digress here in order to examine a rather different aspect of the question. A very large number of conforming laymen, from a desire to do good, or to afford their children evidence of the public recognition of religious principles, attach themselves to churches, under protest all the while against doctrines which no reasonable man can be supposed to hold. Such men will tell us that they are not practising reserve at all. They studiously avoid joining in those portions of public worship which involve

would undoubtedly do more to bring about a revision of the documents in question than the mere fact of exodus from orthodox communions. But when we reflect what it really means : the recitation of a most solemn declaration of belief, with an equally solemn proviso that the reciter does not believe what he is saying, it is extremely difficult to realise its possibility.

acquiescence in what they cannot believe, and they are careful to enlighten those for whom they are responsible to the utmost possible extent. What is there to be urged against such a proceeding?

In the first place it is difficult, to my thinking, to conceive of such a proceeding being faithfully maintained for long. The exercise of such constant alertness will be felt to be a burden grievous to be borne, and the more naturally so because demanded in connection with the exercise of the opposite order—that of worship—in which the intellectual faculties should be set free from any excessive strain to rest in contemplation. The man who attempts to combine a devotional attitude with unflagging vigilance lest he commit himself to what repels his better judgment will find that he has undertaken a difficult and wearisome task. It is one, too, which is to be reprobated on account of the consciousness of intellectual supe-

riority to the mass of worshippers which is sure to suggest itself in some more or less subtle form, and which is eminently destructive of the true purpose of worship, namely, humility and the drawing closer of the social bond. The probability is the man who frankly takes up this attitude will soon weary of it, and then, if his motive persists, will slip into an enfeebled and degenerate conformity, where his previously high reasons will sink into those of social convenience and advantage, and he will be lost to the cause of progress.

I cannot but avail myself of this connection to urge the undesirability that public worship, which ought to be a spiritual rest and restorative, should be hampered by propositions and formulas which, however rational they might be, cannot prove to the serious mind other than distractions. It is true that language will always remain a medium of collective worship, and that

individuals will always attach to words their own meaning; but that this may be the case without any sense of conflict or intellectual friction is also true, and in the face of the possibilities of a devotional literature which grows richer year by year, it seems nothing less than cruel to decree that men shall only avail themselves of the benefit of worship on the condition of either mentally subscribing to what they do not believe, or mentally protesting against it. And in evidence that this is not merely the feeling of the writer, but of minds of a high order, let me quote the words of one who is not generally associated with existing modes of worship, and whose words will for that reason and for his intellectual eminence have the more weight. The late Prof. Huxley said: 'I can conceive the existence of an Established Church which should be a blessing to the community. A church in which, week by week, services

should be devoted, not to the iteration of abstract propositions in theology, but to the setting before men's minds of an ideal of true, just, and pure living; a place in which those who are weary of the burden of daily cares should find a moment's rest in the contemplation of the higher life which is possible for all, though attained by so few; a place in which the man of strife and of business should have time to think how small, after all, are the rewards he covets compared with peace and charity. Depend upon it, if such a church existed, no one would seek to disestablish it.'[1]

But, in the second place, the position of lay-conformity-under-protest appears to disadvantage on the score of the countenance it lends to the very beliefs protested against. The effect of the apparent conformity of intelligent men in this case is exactly that of the man of

[1] *Method and Results*, p. 284.

position who lends his name to promote a company of dubious repute—the *effect*, I say; the *motive* may be totally different, and, as has been said, we are here dealing not with motives, but with results. The man who accepts influence in a church where the greater number must be strangers to all but his name and position, thereby makes himself responsible for the doctrine of that church, or at least for such part of it as is apparent in its general procedure. He can make known to only a few his peculiar reservations; to the majority, he stands committed to the whole system. In proportion as his influence has weight, it will issue in maintaining the very crudities which he himself rejects. A more unsatisfactory position could scarcely be imagined; and if it be said that such an argument can only tell with those who have an over-weening sense of their importance, I reply that the humblest and

least influential adds his or her unit to the general acquiescence on which a false system continues to thrive.

What has been called 'the ethics of conformity' is not, properly speaking, a part of 'theological reserve'; it lies, however, very close to the border-line, and I have been led to digress into it because it seems to me that, after all, the position of laymen with regard to *it* does not materially differ from the position of clergymen respecting reserve. At any rate, their cases are very similar in connection with the plea we are now examining, the plea of usefulness. So far as that is the motive of each class of men, both must fail in the object aimed at. Both come to acquire a mediocrity of aspiration and purpose that vitiates the original motive. On the whole, the case is rather worse with laymen than with the clergy, for the latter at least have opportunities of warning their congregations against the

falsity of what they profess to believe, whereas the layman has no such opportunity—or only on a very limited scale—so that whatever be the immediate and temporary usefulness of his position, he is prolonging the existence of superstition and false opinions, is giving his name to a company in which many will invest to their sorrow, is passing charts that can only result in disaster and loss.

§ 10.

The Machiavellian Plea.

I HAVE yet one more plea to put for reticence, and this arises in a different quarter from those already noticed. It comes from the conforming agnostic who asks: Why should we quarrel with men who are carrying on within the church the very process we desire to see achieved?

This attitude is too much that of

those who would say : Let things alone ; a few more shipwrecks, a little more loss of life, and men will at length be induced to discard the old charts. Now, if it were merely a matter of getting rid of old charts, I dare say that this method, insidious as it will strike many, would be effective enough. The main consideration, however, to the practical voyager is the safety of the ship and those on board, and I fail to see how repeated demonstrations of the inadequacy of the charts will minister to this security. In other words, if it be our object merely to destroy false opinions, we might no doubt safely leave them to work out their own *reductio ad absurdum* ; but very much more is involved than the removal of those opinions, viz., the interests of those who require guidance and motive for the difficult task of life. Were it not for these interests, why should we disturb ourselves ? Nay, why should we follow truth at all, save

that truth alone can further men's final interests? Therefore, I take it, we are not so much concerned with removing false opinion as with realising true opinion, and thus the great danger attendant on reserve in religion is the danger to religion itself.

As Sir Leslie Stephen observes in his volume on 'Free-thinking and Plain-speaking':—

'*The greatest danger to which we are exposed at the present moment is not that people find the old faiths failing them, but that they begin to doubt whether there be anywhere such a thing to be found as faith in anything*' (p. 9).

This is the doubt that kills. Next to a perverted will, it is probably the most fatal kind of moral disorder our nature can contract. It is not the uncertainty as to whether what we have believed to be true really is true; that were a comparatively small matter; it is the moral

bewilderment induced by the juggling of those who say one thing and believe another, who manipluate the plainest facts and combine the most irreconcilable statements as though they were giving an exhibition of sleight-of-hand. It is the continual misgiving, the state of insecurity, suspicion, distrust brought about by the feeling that in the most sacred positions and obligations men are not serious. What other feeling can be induced in the minds of men and women shrewd enough to be sensible of these inconsistencies, yet unskilled to detect their fallacies, and (more unhappily still) unable to dissociate religion from the formulas of it? Where, they cry, is truth to be found? What is there on which we can rely, certain that it will not crumble into the dust when the common understanding endeavours to grasp it?

What, for example, is the effect on the multitude of intelligent young men in

our land, of such conduct as that exhibited the other day by the Dean of Ripon? What is the impression made on the average man of affairs by the spectacle of his clergyman publicly reciting a creed—albeit 'with a triumphant voice'—for which the only apology he can offer is the possible utility of error? 'Do the parsons think us fools!' a commercial man exclaimed to me the other day. Whatever the parsons think, the generality of men are neither fools nor children, and the man who is shrewd enough to earn his livelihood, is shrewd enough to see in the tortuous refuge of theological ambiguity a solemn kind of hocus-pocus.

When a man affirms publicly and on his oath that he believes in 'the only Son,' and then, when we consult him by the fireside, tells us that he means no more than a unique son; when a man tells us that the Bible is '*the* inspired Word of God,' and then, when pressed,

admits it contains errors, and a great deal of morality which we politely term 'oriental,' and, in fact, is in no essential respect different from other forms of literature; when he tells us that if we do not 'think of' God in a certain way we shall '*without doubt*' be damned, and then admits that by 'damnation' he means something very like 'salvation,' and that all he has said with so much deliberation and circumstance amounts to this: that we may be saved whether we think of God in one way or another; when a man publicly attaches importance to miracles as attesting a Divine revelation, and privately concedes that by a 'miracle' he means no more than an event which is ultimately explainable, and therefore in no way differs from other events, and attests nothing except its own existence; when a man claims the right of using words in such a way as practically to say that two and two

make five, provided he has made up his mind privately that one of the twos is equivalent to a three ;—when, I say, such contortions as these are practised, and they are practised every Sabbath day, what is the ordinary shrewd man to think ? For such shifts the plain man has but one name ; it is not an elegant one, yet I am bound to say we may search the dictionary in vain for a better—it is 'humbug.'

Leave this 'humbug' alone, and there is no doubt in the least that the desire of our agnostic Machiavellis will be fulfilled, but what becomes of our ordinary shrewd man in the meantime ? He has, on the whole, an immense respect for religion, though a somewhat vague notion of what it is. He sees that the ideas with which it is inseparably connected in his own mind—ideas of miracles, of an infallible Bible, of a supernatural Man—are untenable. So much he sees fairly clearly.

The evil of Reserve is that it prevents other ideas of religion which are tenable from taking the place of these in his mind and heart. The net result of the attitude is that he 'begins to wonder whether there be anywhere such a thing as faith in anything'; in all probability he will end there, as poor Stephen Blackpool ended, with the pathetic lament 'It's all a muddle.' And if he should find his way to a conception of religion as a child-like trust and a patient self-devoted service for his fellows, he certainly will not have to thank that Reserve which on the specious pleas of caution, of avoiding pain, and of 'usefulness' has obscured for him and his like the serene simplicity of life.

Reserve, then, though certain in the long run to lead to a discarding of the old charts, involves, in the meantime, an appalling amount of shipwreck. It is all very well for our Machiavellian agnostic

to whisper counteracting reassurances about the diffusion of ethical maxims. Ethical maxims do certainly abound, but moral welfare is less dependent on ethical science than on personal example. The Greeks became corrupt and enfeebled, not for lack of ethical science, which indeed they had in a remarkable degree, but for lack of men actually alive to the force of ethical obligation. The Rome of Honorius, which revelled in scenes of cruelty and bloodshed—the Rome of the Fourth Century—was, be it remembered, *Christian in sentiment;* but only when Telemachus *applied* that sentiment and 'flung himself between the gladiatorial swords' did Rome awake to see its inconsistency and resolve no more to 'wallow in that old lust of paganism.' The truth is that, however saturated the atmosphere may be at any given time with moral maxims, men are comparatively powerless to form a just estimate of their moral

condition without the search-light of individual example. In a word, the didactic is of less value to the moral welfare than the dramatic. It was not the fine distillations of the rabbinic schools that revealed the true state of Judea, but the Calvary of Jesus. The man who, in his own life—howsoever humble and obscure that life may be—raises a standard of Veracity, though he never utter a single maxim on duty, draws men by the magnetism of truth to that standard, and awakens in them spiritual energies which for lack of his example would remain dormant for ever.

§ 11.

Why not be Outspoken?

Thus I base my plea for outspokenness in Social Service. Progress is dependent on a series of changes, and these changes can only be initiated by

individuals or very small groups of individuals. However slight the degree of individual enlightenment, I conceive its possessor to be in trust to the rest of mankind to make it known without turning aside to listen to the philosophical demand for a perfect system or the personal plea that he is but one among so many. If any one of a crew know of the existence of rocks, not marked on the chart, in the track of the vessel, surely the safety of all concerned rests on his making known the information; the fact that he is but a sailor before the mast makes no difference to his duty to the rest. But if he should be a captain or one high in command, not only is the duty laid upon him, but the responsibility is greater in proportion to the greater degree of credit attaching to what he says.

I appeal, therefore, to any of those who hold positions of responsibility in

the churches, and into whose hands this may chance to fall, and ask them as a fellow-man *why* they should preserve the attitude they do? why they should misrepresent facts? why they should continue to hold publicly forms which they reject in private? Surely, as an ordinary man, as a member of a State whose guidance in religious matters is in the hands of these men, I have a right to ask this plain question; and surely as responsible men, amenable to rational judgment, those whom I ask will not withhold an answer though it be to the meanest sailor under their command. If such men as the Bishop and the Dean of Ripon, Mr. Illingworth, the Archdeacon of Manchester, Dr. Clifford, and Mr. Campbell will have the frankness to answer this plain question—especially seeing that it is raised in no idle curiosity, but in the honest desire to understand their position—they will contribute to the quieting of an immense

mass of vague suspicion and distrust which, to say the least, cannot be a wholesome temper for a people whose lives are in no aspect too restful, or for a nation whose course is by no means clear.

Summing up, I would remind them that it is vain to urge the need of caution in quitting the old standpoint, since the function of caution is to test what is admittedly probable, not to retain what is admittedly false ; it is vain to plead the pain which such discarding of old beliefs may afford some, since it is to the majority that we are responsible, while concessions to the few who are weak do not tend to make them stronger ; it is vain to await the full realisation of opinion, since that is obviously dependent on individual initiative ; it is vain to urge the opportunities for usefulness afforded by the prestige of these formulas, since a false conformity devitalises the individual, while the very object of the opportunities so sought is

the furtherance of a progress only secured by the voidance of outworn beliefs; that it is an inhuman thing to advocate conformity to such beliefs in order to reduce them to absurdity, when, all the while, men are crying out for truth, and languishing for want of firm and healthy principle. Further, when it is conceded, as it must be conceded, that this spirit of reserve is fruitful, *intellectually*, in rapid deterioration and mediocrity; *politically*, in opportunism and *laisser faire; socially*, in distrust of one another; *religiously*, in the postponement of a true and living faith; while it has every appearance of sanctioning those frauds and doubtful practices with which commerce and industry are only too prone to abound, and to purge our transactions of which should be one of the very first objects of national religion; when, I say, these facts are conceded, and the spirit of theological reserve is considered in all its bearings,

will not our religious leaders admit the indefensible risks they run in maintaining this attitude?

THE END.

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